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/For information on the function of the Taravād as a clan, lineage and matrilineal household unit, the researcher is advised to check all three categories listed above./

/The term "clan" has been used by at least two authors in this file, notably Fawcett and Thurston and Rangachari (who quote from Fawcett), to refer to subdivisions of the Nayar caste, which are actually subcastes and have accordingly been marked for category 564. These "clans" as listed by Fawcett (6: Fawcett, p. 187) are as follows:

Kiriyattil
Sûdra
Kurup
Nambiyâr
Urali
Nalliôden
Viyyûr
Akattu Châma
Purattu Châma
Vattakkâd
Vangiloth
Kitâvu
Pallichan
Muppathinâyiran
Vîyâpâri or Râvâri
Attikkurissi
Mânavallan
Vengôlan
Adungâdi
Adiôdi
Âmayengolam./

within a few feet. Equal interdining took place only between members of the same caste or sub-caste, but at a higher caste feast members of lower castes might receive food from higher caste hosts. The Nambudiris, royalty, chiefs, temple servants, retainers, middle-class and servant Nayars thus collectively formed the "good" castes of the society. Nambudiris and two small castes of their temple servants were patrilineal; all the rest were matrilineal. (1)

Below all these castes, living in a separate part of the village, were the "low" or "polluting" castes. These included in order of rank, Iravas or toddy-tappers and tenant-farmers, with 20 to 50 households per village; Kanisans (astrologers) with one to three households per village; the artisan castes (blacksmiths, gold-smiths, carpenters, bell-metal workers and stone-masons, who ranked equally) each with one to three houses per village; low caste washermen and barbers (who ranked equally) each with one to five houses per village; and bow-makers, each with about one to ten houses per village. Iravas, Kanisans, washermen and barbers had double unilineal descent: [25] patrilineal, patrilocal extended families with fraternal polyandrv, cross-c cut by large exogamous dispersed matrilineal clans. Artisans and bow-makers had patrilineal descent with patrilocal extended families and fraternal polyandry. All of these castes worked for each other and for the "good" castes of the village. Iravas, the most numerous and influential, owned their own house-sites and leased rice-lands and other garden lands from the matrilineal

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

exponents. Marriages at all levels between the religious and secular hierarchies pointed up this interdependence.

Among the Nayars hypergamy must also have cemented lord-vassal relationships. Older Nayars still take pride in the fact that their lineages have for centuries been fathered by chiefs, royals, and Brahmans. Traditionally, it was for the sake of this generalized filial bond that they were prepared to die in battle and, paradoxically, to deny themselves paternal rights in their own children.

Matrilineal Units of the Nayar Retainer Castes

THE CLAN

The clan was the largest matrilineal unit to which a Nayar commoner belonged. Its members believed themselves descended from a common ancestress, but her name was not normally remembered and the exact genealogical relationships between a clan's subordinate segments were often unknown. Occasionally, all of a clan's known members lived within a single Nayar neighborhood (*tara*). In this case the clan was co-terminous with the next lower order of matrilineal unit, which I call the lineage. More commonly, the clan had a nucleus of members within the neighborhood from which it originally sprang, together with outlying segments whose forebears had moved to other neighborhoods of the chiefdom. Clan affiliations among Nayar retainers do not seem to have extended beyond the chiefdom.

The clan was called a *taravād*, the word also used for the lineage and the matrilineal household unit. "Taravād" is derived from "tara," meaning "mound,"[6] in this case the raised foundation on which a Nayar house was built. Its members derived a sense of unity from the belief that their matrilineal forebears sprang from the same ancestral house, and if the site of this house still existed they retained a sentimental attachment to it. The word "taravād" (befitting for a settled agricultural people) was in fact equivalent to the English "house" in its sense both of ancestry and of place. The clan was usually called by the name of its original ancestral house site.

The clan was exogamous and sex relations within it were forbidden. Those of its members who lived near and met often used kinship terms to address each other. If a death or birth occurred, clan members had to be informed by messenger. Upon receipt of the informa-

[6] Any kind of raised foundation of earth or laterite is called a tara. Tara (meaning "neighborhood") is derived from the large platform of earth round a sacred "milk"-exuding tree (*alstonia scholaris*) located near the Nayar neighborhood temple of Bhagavadi. The neighborhood assembly congregated on this mound.

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

tion they entered for fifteen days into a condition of ritual pollution. They might not eat with nor touch other Nayars, enter the temple or other houses, bathe in the public bathing pools of their caste, or eat meat or salt. Death pollution, and to a milder degree birth pollution, cut off the clan from participation in the social life of the caste. It isolated the members as a group set apart in a special and dangerous ritual condition, who had to observe taboos for their own and each others' safety. Its observance stressed the kinship connection of clansmen and marked their common concern on the occasion of an increase or decrease in their membership. Only those clansmen living within the neighborhood, however, were obliged to attend a funeral or visit a house of birth. Beyond these observances clansmen had only loosely defined rights of hospitality in each other's homes. As far as I am aware they never assembled as an organized group.

In time a clan might divide into two or more clans by the common consent of its members. The decision to separate depended both on geographical distance and on distance of relationship. If a segment of the core unit moved into an adjacent neighborhood its members might maintain clanship with the parent lineage for several hundred years thereafter. If they moved to a distant part of the district (say, fifteen miles away) their grandchildren might sever the connection. Severing clanship was called "cutting the pollution bond." Representatives of the branches met and decided not to inform each other of future deaths in their respective groups. Usually the outlying branch would soon afterward adopt the name of the oldest ancestral house site in its own vicinity as its clan name. Exogamy was theoretically preserved as long as matrilineal ties were remembered—usually, about three generations after the division.

Beyond the neighborhood, clan ties had no legal or economic concomitants and were relatively unimportant, their claims being subordinated to those of lineage, village, neighborhood, district, and kingdom.

THE LINEAGE

A lineage comprised those members of a clan living in one Nayar neighborhood, and it operated within the legal and social framework of this unit. As we have noted, the retainer Nayars of a neighborhood were of the same caste. They interdined and intermarried freely and the neighborhood was their unit of caste administration. A neighborhood might comprise the retainer Nayars of one village or of two or three adjacent villages, or occasionally Nayars of only part of a large village (e.g., a royal village) in which more than one caste of

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

were no longer sure of the name of their founding ancestress. The reason for this was that over time, a lineage was formed from the successive divisions of matrilineal households springing from an original matrilineal household. As will be seen later, a matrilineal group occupying one house and jointly owning property divided into its component major segments to form two or more new households at a definite point in its development. Each woman was potentially the ancestress of a distinct segment. However, her segment would in fact become distinct only if she had two or more daughters who themselves lived to bear daughters. If she had only one daughter this woman replaced her in the lineage structure as the ancestress of her segment, and after three or four generations the existence of one or other of these women would be forgotten.

However, although exact genealogical relationships tended to be forgotten after some five to seven generations, the order of segmentation within a lineage was remembered because it was relevant to the reversion of property. If a household died out, its property was divided between those segments of the same order as itself which had sprung from the next larger segment. It is for this reason that I call the clan members of one neighborhood a lineage, for their order of segmentation *was* known and was relevant in this limited context. As far as I am aware, those branches of a clan which left their ancestral neighborhood lost their right to claim property in the village of their origin.

In other ways the order of segmentation was unimportant for the structuring of intra-lineage relationships. It is true that minimal segments of a minor segment which had jointly held property a generation previously, maintained a closer sense of kinship than did more distantly related segments. But segments intermediate between the household and the lineage had no special property, activities, or ceremonies, and their members never met to the exclusion of other lineage kin. Neither were whole intermediate segments mobilized in quarrels between individuals of a lineage. Quarrels were restricted to the households of the disputants and were normally settled through appeal to a popular, unrelated arbitrator. If they became serious they were forcibly settled by the intervention of the neighborhood assembly and of the village headman.

As a part of the clan, the lineage was exogamous, sex relations were prohibited within it, and ritual pollution was observed by its members at a birth or death. Outside the lineage and within the clan it is doubtful whether these rules could be enforced by law. Within

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

WOMAN-SISTER'S CHILDREN

A woman and her sister's children should behave toward each other so far as possible in the same way as a woman and her own children. A motherless child was brought up collectively by his mother's sisters, usually attaching himself in particular to one of her younger sisters. As a member of their household who stood in a maternal relationship to them, a woman expected reverence, companionship, and practical help from her sisters' sons and a measure of obedience, companionship, and coöperation in domestic tasks from her sisters' daughters.

Terminologically and behaviorally, the mother's sisters were differentiated by age in relation to the mother. The mother's older sister received more respect than the mother, especially if she was the oldest woman in the household. Her role approximated that of the maternal grandmother after the latter's death. The mother's elder sister usually had children of her own by the time ego was born. She tended to advise ego's mother on how to care for him rather than tending him intimately herself. The mother's younger sister's role, by contrast, approximated that of a much older sister. Before she had children of her own, she often played the part of a long-suffering nursemaid and usually remained a favorite throughout her life. A mother's younger sister who was younger than ego was called by her personal name and treated as a younger sister.

Theoretically, attitudes proper toward the mother should be extended to all women of her generation within the lineage and clan. Actually, a rather sharp distinction was drawn between "mothers" of ego's own property group and those outside it. Behavior which was axiomatic within the property group became a matter of polite etiquette toward more distant kinswomen. Within the property group two or more sibling groups descended from sisters might oppose each other in adulthood. When the maternal grandmother and all males of senior generations were dead, their disputes might culminate in division of the property even while their mothers were living. Such inter-segmental disputes created strains in the relationship with the mother's sisters, but these ought not to become apparent in open quarreling.

WOMAN-DAUGHTER'S CHILDREN

A woman had strong control over her daughter's children. Her authority surpassed that of the mother and she retained the last word in matters of feeding or of care in sickness. At a time when her daughters were absorbed in childbearing and in relations with their husbands, she was deeply concerned for the future of her taravăd as a group and

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
North Kerala Nayar

627 Murder among the Nayars
sometimes led to blood feuds between lineages (*ibid.*, I: 195–196).
613 Chiefs could usually cut short a feud between commoner lineages, but
628 even these feuds occasionally ran their course for a generation, although cognatic and affinal ties between lineages helped to bring them to a close. Greater feuds were sometimes waged between the lineages of village headmen or chiefs of adjacent districts, in which the commoner Nayars of each area might participate.

Matrilineal Units

THE CLAN

614 564 Among Nambiar commoners the largest matrilineal unit was the clan (*vamsham* or *illam*). It had the functions of exogamy and mutual hospitality. Common descent was merely stipulated and not demonstrated and the order of segmentation within the clan was unknown. [635] The clan might be dispersed throughout a kingdom or even, perhaps, between kingdoms. Its members might point to a particular village as their original ancestral site, but each clan seems to have been much older and its history less clearly documented than among Nayar retainers in Central Kerela. There is no doubt that clans became much more dispersed in the nineteenth century than they had traditionally been because of the development of new areas of cultivation and increased mobility between villages. However, even traditionally the clan seems to have had more members and a wider spread than in the Central area. Its characteristics may be attributed to several factors. First, Nambiars were not divided into separate retainer castes. Thus, although the majority of commoner marriages were within the village, [582] Nambiars did have greater freedom to marry and move more freely between villages throughout the realm. Lacking a strong superordinate political structure and internal caste differentiation to give form to their relationships, they had larger kinship units. Newcomers to a village probably did not need to become affiliated to its assembly by order [608] of a superior political authority. Instead, they could probably affiliate themselves with their clan fellows and so at once be provided also with classificatory affines in other clans. Second, Nambiars practised
614 avunculocal residence; husband and wife lived in the husband's
564 matrilineal ancestral house (Buchanan, 1807: 513–514). Sons normally
591 moved back to their own matrilineal homes at puberty, but daughters
[425] moved to their husbands' homes. However, Nambiar fathers occasionally gave privately acquired land to their wives and children when they were able. The children might then settle permanently in

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
North Kerala Nayar

the father's village, if this was different from the mother's. In this way, matrilineal kin might become widely scattered between many villages, while remembering the village from which their matrilineal forebears sprang.

THE SUB-CLAN

This group corresponded to the clan in Central Kerala. It was a segment of the clan whose members seem to have been located within one chiefdom. The structure and functions of this group were identical with those of the clan in Central Kerala, the members observing death and birth pollutions as well as exogamy.

THE LINEAGE

As in Central Kerala, the lineage was that portion of a clan located in one neighborhood (tara). Traditionally there seem to have been about six to ten lineages in one neighborhood, as in Central Kerala. A lineage was internally segmented and segmentation was relevant to the reversion of property. Exogamy, the observance of pollution, and the extension of kinship terms inhered in the lineage. Perhaps because village headship was weaker than in Calicut and each commoner lineage stronger as an organized group of kinsfolk, rites connected with the lineage were more prominent in the North than in the Center (Gough, 1958). There were few or no neighborhood temples of Bhagavadi. Instead, each lineage held a grand annual festival to its own patron Bhagavadi and to minor male deities, in which the lower castes took part. We have mentioned blood feuds between lineages, which indicate that a lineage was, in popular thought, if not in law, considered responsible for its members' physical protection.

Little is known today of the enangar relationship in North Kerala. It did exist, and enangar are said to have attended life-crisis rites and to have had some function in neighborhood caste trials of offenders against religious law. However, enangar did not tie the tālis of immature girls and did not participate in any form of group marriage. Among Nambiars and in most of the aristocratic Nayar lineages a girl's tāli was tied before puberty by some local Nambudiri Brahman. He was often an old man, and he appears to have had no right of cohabitation. The woman and her children did not observe pollution at his death. As far as I can judge the tāli rite in this area was merely an initiation rite which, at least in the nineteenth century, removed the ritual danger of cohabiting with a virgin (Gough, 1955). It also instituted the etiquette associated with incest prohibitions between the girl and her matrilineal kinsmen.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

collapsed and the old system of differential land-rights between Nambūdiris and rulers on the one hand and their Nayar tenants on the other has been seriously undermined. Yet even today Nayars remark with pride that their lineage has 'fathers' in the lineages of their former landlords and chiefs, while chiefs and royalty alike revere their Nambūdiri *genitors*, and boast that the blood of these Gods of the earth is running in their veins.

Part II. The Nayar *Tali*-Rite in North Malabar

North Malabar lies north of the Kora River, being the old kingdoms of Kolattiri, Kurumbrattiri, and Kadattunad. Except for the coast-towns expanded by Europeans, it is sparsely populated and mountainous; part of it is forest. Villages lie separated by hill ranges, usually as clusters of houses on the hillsides surrounding small wet paddy-flats in the valleys. This contrasts with South Malabar and Cochin, where the coastal plain is wider, paddy-land extensive, and settlement usually continuous between villages.

Perhaps because of its difficult environment, North Malabar did not before 1792 approach the degree of political centralization achieved in the central area. The Kolattiri Rajas, it is true, temporarily conquered Kottayam, Kurumbranad, and Kadattunad, but the area was never consolidated as was the Zomorin's kingdom. Within the small kingdoms, *nāduvaris* fought each other and rebelled against their Rajas, allying themselves with different rulers as suited their needs of the moment. Neighbouring *desavaris* sometimes fought each other within the *nād*, while within the *desam*, *kudipaga* (lineage-feud) persisted till modern times.

Consistent with this lack of political centralization, high-class Nayars were not divided into sub-castes with administrative and occupational functions. Instead they had exogamous clans, dispersed between many villages. In Kottayam and Kolattunad the bulk of Nayars were Nambiars, independent land-owners owing only nominal allegiance to a chief. *Desavaris*, appointed by the Raja or the *nāduvari*, had administrative powers in their villages but belonged to the same sub-caste as other Nambiars. In most villages the land was divided between the Nayar property-groups as owners, Nayar tenancies being less common than in the south. *Nāduvari* lineages, however, usually owned the land in the whole village where they lived, employed Nambiar tenants as retainers, and claimed superior caste-rank, calling themselves Samantan Nambiars. Nambūdiri Brahmans are fewer in the north than in the south, especially since the Muslim invasions from Mysore in the 1760s, when many fled to Travancore. Those who remain live as landlords in widely separated villages, with local Nambiar lineages as retainers. The Nayar servant castes are spatially distributed as in the south. The lower polluting castes of manual workers are present in similar proportions, but Tiyyars and their washermen and barbers are matrilineal in North Malabar, patrilineal in the south.

The Nayar Kinship System. North Malabar Nayars, though trained in arms in the private gymnasia of their lineages, were not recruited as a permanent militia of the kingdom. Instead they cultivated their own lands with the aid of Tiyyar tenants, the serf castes being absent over most of the area. It seems largely because of this difference of occupation, North Malabar Nayars are virilocal: a wife moves on marriage to the ancestral house of her husband, and remains with him with rare exceptions till his death. Her children are brought up by their father and commonly return to their own lineage at puberty. A boy then begins to manage his *tarawād* property under the direction of his *kāranavan*, while a girl is shortly afterwards married, from the lineage house, by common consent of her *kāranavan* and her father, often to the *kāranavan*'s son or to a maternal nephew of the father.

Divorce is permitted, but is rarer than in the south. Polygyny is rare, polyandry even traditionally forbidden. A cuckolded husband formerly cut off the hair of his wife and returned her to her lineage. The *genitor* has customary rights in and obligations to his children. In

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWll Kerala AWll Nayar Tiyyar

Rajas to assist at their ceremonies. Kolattiri women married Koil Tamburan or Nambûdiri men, and Kolattiri men Samantan Nambiar or Nambiar women. In the Kadattunad lineage, which once owed fealty to Kolattiri as an ordinary chiefly lineage, the *tâli* was tied by Kolattiri princes. Women of the lineage married Kolattiri or Nambûdiri men, and men, chiefly women of or village headmen's lineages of their kingdoms.

It is clear that, at least for the 'ordinary' Nambiars who married almost exclusively with each other, the *tâli*-rite was no more than an initiation ceremony giving the girl the status of a married woman. It is fitting that the *tâli* should not be tied by an *enangan*, for, polyandry being prohibited, the girls of a lineage were not married collectively to the local group as a whole. Since the *sambandham* union was permanent, the husband's sexual rights exclusive, and the father accorded legal, ritual, and social rights, it is difficult to explain this rite in terms of social function. It is true, of course, that like all Nayar rites it had the function of identifying the Nayars as a group with customs distinctive from those of other groups. It may also be possible to argue that it gave ritual recognition to the overlordship of Nambûdiris. It was not, however, as in South Malabar, closely in keeping with the political and economic systems, either in the kingdom or the village. Nambûdiri landlords were few, and many Nayars would have to call for the rite Nambûdiris of distant villages to whom they had no relationship as retainers.

Similarly, the *tâli*-rite in the Kolattiri lineage seems to have resulted less from the lineage's bond to the Koil Tamburans, than the reverse: for, if we are to believe informants, the Koil Tamburans were brought from Travancore expressly to perform the *tâli*-rite and assist at other ceremonies of the Kolattiri lineage. I am not prepared to state that the North Malabar *tâli*-rite had no other social function, since I never saw it and the evidence is incomplete. It seems, however, that certain aspects of the rite, both in north and south, cannot be explained in terms of social function but only in terms of psychological motivations. This I defer until I have discussed the place of this rite in the kinship systems of North and South Malabar Tiyyars.

Part III. The Tiyyar Kinship System and *Tâli*-Rite in North Malabar

The Tiyyars farm land leased on short-term tenures from Nayars and live in the low-caste quarters of the same villages. In this area they are matrilineal. Like Nayars, they were organized into *taras*, the hereditary headman (Tandan) of the *tara* being responsible to the *desavari* for the administration of caste law among Tiyyars and the lower castes.[1]

Each *tara* might contain ten to twelve Tiyyar lineages and one each of Tiyyar washermen (Vannâns, called Mannâns in the south) and barbers (Kâvutiyyans, called Vâtthis in the south). The Tiyyar lineage, like the Nayar, is exogamous, is united by birth and death pollutions, the worship of a lineage goddess, and snake-worship, and is divided into property-groups each containing a°sibling group together with the children and maternal grandchildren of the sisters. The Tiyyars, like the Nayars, have dispersed matrilineal exogamous clans. In this area (but not in South Malabar) Tiyyar men may hypergamously marry women of the Tiyyar barber (but not the washerman) caste.

Tiyyars, like Nayars, are predominantly virilocal. Unlike Nayars, Tiyyar men, having little ancestral property, may remain with the father and build a house on land leased from Nayars near the father's dwelling-group. Though filiation is officially matrilineal, and children retain rights in any land or houses their matrilineal group may own, the *local* descent-group, persisting over three to four generations, is therefore often patrilineal. Polyandry is forbidden,

[1] I have no information on the *enangu* institution of North Malabar Tiyyars. Dr Aiyappan's (1944, *passim*) discussion of the Tiyyar *enangu* system seems, from my knowledge of Tiyyars, to apply only to patrilineal Tiyyars of South Malabar. In Kottayam informants did not remember the institution which, if it existed, must have died out thirty to fifty years ago

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWII Kerala AWII
Tiyyar

[South Malabar and Cochin]

613 must be unrelated: if a man married an *enangar* woman, the *enangar* bond was broken and each lineage must find new, unrelated *enangar*. *Enangar* must be present to witness marriages, [069] to help at funerals, and to represent their lineage's ancestral spirits in the ceremonial food-[065] offerings to spirits on the sixteenth day after, or the anniversary of, a death. The prohibition on marriages between *enangar* acts as an insurance that the *enangar* should not be prejudiced by ties of matrilaterial or affinal kinship in their task of bringing to justice members of the linked lineage who offended against caste law. Among Nayars, this was less likely to happen because patrilateral ties were less strong than are matrilaterial ties among Tiyyars.

614 Cutting across their lineage-grouping, the Tiyyars had dispersed, exogamous matri-613 lineal clans, comparable with the clans of the north. My informants knew nothing about these clans except that they were once exogamous. They are not so today, since some people do 582 not remember their clan-names. Though the clans have died out, marriage is prohibited between known matrilineal kin.

595 The Tiyyars of this area had fraternal polyandry. In this they must be distinguished 585 from the Nayars, since the Tiyyars banned non-fraternal polyandry, while the Nayars of Malabar and Cochin forbade the marriage of one woman to two men of the same lineage, not to mention the same sibling-group. Tiyyar fraternal polyandry died out about twenty years ago. To carry out this marriage, the horoscopes of the girl and the eldest potential husband were compared and the amount of the dowry of jewels and vessels fixed. The bride-grooms went to the girl's house with their kin and *enangar*. Their mother's brother handed clothing for the bride, together with the *kānam* sum as in Norther Malabar, to the mother's [533] brother of the bride. A learned man sang a marriage formula to the effect that the girl of such a lineage was here given to the men of such a lineage, with caste-men and the sacred lamp as witness. He adjured the bridegroom's party to punish her reasonably when necessary, but to 'Keep her well, but if you are displeased with her, bring her back to us even if she has ten children, and we shall have her back, after settling the accounts in the presence of the third man [the go-between in marriage arrangements] and the *enangan*.' The bride was seated in the marriage hall at the end of a row beside her bridegrooms. The bridegroom's mother and other kinsfolk, and finally their *enangan* and his wife, fed the grooms and then the bride with porridge and with coconut-milk.

[606] The marriage was consummated shortly afterwards in the bride's house, where each husband in order of age went to live with her for one or two weeks. At the end of the honey-moon period she was brought permanently to the husband's house, where she became her mother-in-law's subordinate. The husbands cohabited with her for equal periods in turn by the arrangement of their mother. Even a child might be married to the common wife by the 595 milk-tie, and when he grew up claim conjugal rights in his much older wife. If the family were [601] large and the wife weak in health, a second and even a third woman might, at least in modern [428] times, be married by all the brothers and shared as their common wife. Children called all the fathers *appan*, prefacing distinguishing terms. Sons had equal rights of inheritance. The system mitigated against division of property, but, at least in modern times, if the family became large, brothers might, on the death of their fathers, divide the property and the children and each take one of the wives to live with him in middle life.

586 Divorce is permitted: a divorced wife returns to her brother's house, whence she may in theory be remarried. To effect a divorce, the eldest husband traditionally took a piece of thread from his loin-cloth, burnt it in two, and blew the two pieces away, saying to the brother of the girl, 'Here is your sister's *ächāram*.' *Ächāram* commonly means 'custom', and Aiyappan (1944, p. 184), interprets the phrase, 'Hereby the "thread-tie" [formed by presenting a loin-cloth to the wife at marriage] is snapped, and with it my customary rights over this woman as her husband terminate.' The earnest money was returned to the husband's kin in the

8:Panikkar I-4, 5 (no date) 1918 AWII Kerala AWII Nayar

101 is from the Sanskrit work *Nayaka*, meaning leader. As such a derivation flatters the national vanity of the community it has been accepted without question. The utter absurdity of the idea that the people who call themselves Aryans (as the Brahmins of Malabar still do) and look down upon the rest from a point of view of racial superiority, can have given them this proud title, never seems to have suggested itself. Moreover, the Aryan settlers of Malabar asserted a spiritual as well as temporal superiority over the Nāyars, which goes far to disprove the theory of the derivation of the word from *Nayaka*, or Lord.

101 614 174 825 771 It seems unquestionable, on the other hand, that the word *Nāyar* is the same as *Nagar*. As the totem names seem to have been imposed on the community from outside it seems reasonable to suppose that this serpent-worshipping people were called by their neighbours *Nagar* or serpent-men. That the Nāyars in ancient days were a totemic clan, is easy to see from the fact that every Nāyar family still holds the serpent sacred. Thus it will not cut down a *Kavu*, or serpent grove, as it is the place where the family serpents reside. It is, of course, natural that in a [161] community of 3½ million souls the same solidarity of totemic feeling, as it exists, say, among the turtle clan, cannot have existed.

M. S. Reinach, in defining totemism as distinct from fetishism, says that the totem is a class of objects regarded by a tribe or clan as tutelary or protective in the widest sense of the word. Take the case of a clan with a serpent totem; the members will call themselves serpents, claim descent from a serpent, abstain from killing serpents, etc. Not only do the Nāyars still show traces of having done all this, but they continue to perform with undiminished zeal *Nagathān* (*thān* is an honorific suffix) *pattus*, or prayers and songs, to the sacred serpents. When anything goes wrong the astrologer generally finds something done to offend the sacred ser- [784] pents. There is one singular case where a man, without heeding the warnings of all his people, went and cleared a serpent grove, and the result was that he died six days later. In popular opinion, this was without doubt due to the wrath of the serpents.

101 174 From all this it seems quite clear that before the Aryan invasion the Nāyars were a community with a *Naga* or serpent totem. This is supported by evidence from Ceylon also. Ceylon chronicles mention that when the Buddha visited the island for the second time (second century B.C.) he found the northern part peopled by Nagas who were fighting with the Yakshas, or the original inhabitants of the land.[1] This is without doubt an emigration of S. Indian people to Ceylon, probably as a result of Aryan pressure from the North. The descendants of these Nagas of Ceylon, it must be noticed, bear a close similarity to the Nāyars in matters of social life. Among their customs may be specially noticed: (*a*) the elasticity or rather the slenderness of the marriage tie which permits the discarding, without any disgrace attached to it, of undesirable husbands or wives; (*b*) the remarriage of such widows

[1] See Parker, *Ancient Ceylon*. London, 1909, p. 16.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

Ambalavásis form alliances with Nayar women, but the latter and their children cannot touch their husbands and fathers without polluting them. The children of this union belong to the mother's family. In the clan system, descent was at first reckoned in the female line; consequently, uterine ties alone constituted kinship. The father was not regarded as related even to his children, and not considered as a member of the family. In this system all the children bear the clan name, and the clan name becomes the test of blood relationship. But the moment the descent is recognised through the male, the clan system breaks down. Among the Nayars the kinship is still reckoned through the female line. 564 582 783

Marriage is endogamous among the low caste Sudrás. The following restrictions are however in force among all classes of Sudrás. There cannot be intermarriages between the descendants of any female ancestor. It is strictly prohibited even in the case of two persons belonging to the same *taravid* or family whose relationship cannot be traced to its origin, but is only traditional. A man cannot marry the sister of his deceased wife. The custom is more changing. A man cannot marry from the family of his deceased wife, but is now limited to the *thdvazhi* to which his wife belonged. Even this is now being overlooked. 564 582 [614]

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll

105 563 [795] There is a small community of Jews in Cochin, divided into White, Brown, and Black, the last named being the most numerous. Other Kerala residents are foreigners such as Canarese, Tamils, Arabs, and Europeans.

105 564 783 Untouchability has been made a penal offence by the present Indian Constitution and there is undoubtedly a tendency among the more enlightened in the country to combat its evils and attempt to eradicate it from modern Hindu society. On the other hand, the religious minded (and there are many) maintain that since the Constitution is a secular one and allows full freedom of religious belief and practice, the legislator cannot interfere in questions of caste and untouchability, as these have to do with the religious law and structure of India. The fact is that, today, untouchability is not what it was, but it cannot be said either that it has been done away with altogether. A visitor to Kerala is certainly immediately made aware of this, as many traditional views on what constitutes intercaste pollution and what does not are still very much in evidence. Thus, although a member of the artisan caste, a [784] [264] Kammalan, perhaps no longer pollutes those above him in the hierarchy, atmospherically, at twenty four feet as he used to do, it is nevertheless unthinkable that he should sit down to a meal of cooked rice with a [463] [484] [784] Nambudri, or even for that matter with a Nayar. The aboriginal Nayadis who still live off begging and hunting may possibly "come into town" now and not have to keep off the roads for fear of polluting other castes merely by being seen within a distance of seventy four feet, but they are not for that admitted to a would-be reformed Indian community in which no distinctions of caste, creed and colour are made any longer; in fact, they themselves, probably out of some sort of perverse attachment to their powers of polluting, refuse to be rehabilitated – as has been attempted by the former government of Travancore – and prefer to carry on with their traditional way of life.

It can thus be safely said that pollution of the higher castes by the lower is very much believed in and guarded against, even in Kerala today. Menstruating women, and also those who have given birth, are still considered to be unclean for a period, varying with the people to whom they belong. And the various kin groups, of which every individual is a member among the Hindus of Kerala, will equally be considered unclean and polluting for a certain amount of days – diminishing in number in inverse proportion to the height of the caste – after a birth or a death has taken place.

[841] [846] [614] [846] [765]

Respect towards a superior, towards a god, towards a respected par-

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll

Respect towards a superior, towards a god, towards a respected parent, or towards the higher casteman, was always shown in Kerala by not wearing anything in his presence above the waist, be one man or woman. Basically, this has changed but little, the Nambudri Brahmin always praying in his private temple with only a loin cloth on, the modern Tiya factory girl now removing the blouse which she has taken to wearing before some important personage of her kin group, so that her breasts are exposed. What is a less frequent sight nowadays is Nayar, Tiya or Kammalan women in the streets and on the roads without some covering over the upper parts of their bodies. Lower caste people, however, Cherumas, Pulayas and aboriginals, being less affected by progress, are still to be seen on the highways, their shapely bodies exposed from the waist upwards.

105 564 576 291

A striking phenomenon in Kerala is the coexistence, even today, of the two radically opposed systems of *marumakkathayam* (matriliny) and of *makkathayam* (patriliny). In the first, children are born into their mother's caste, while in the other they are born into their father's caste. Inheritance is through the mother's brother in the first instance, and through the father in the second. The matrilineal people are grouped in matrilineal clans called *tarawads*, of which the senior male member, the *karanavan*, is the recognized head; the patrilineal people have patrilineal clans called by the same name, *tarawad*, also with the senior male as the *karanavan*, but at the same time, they observe descent through the mother, and all are members of matrilineal descent groups known as *illams* or *kiriyams*. While castes and, strictly speaking, subcastes are in principle endogamous, clans and lineages are definitely exogamous, marriage being matrilocal in the case of matrilineal people and patrilocal in the case of patrilineal people.[1]

104 105 564 614 [611] [428] [613] [588] [591]

Of the high castes, only the Nambudri Brahmins are *makkathayam*. They have patrilineal *gothras* or lineages which are exogamous, and patrilineal clans like *tarawads* which they, however, call *illams*. In olden days, only the eldest son could contract a regular marriage within his caste, marriage being polygamous and patrilocal. The younger sons were either expected to live as *brahmacharyas* (bachelor religious devotees) or could cohabit with Nayar women in a form of union known as *sambandham* to which we shall revert in a moment. They were maintained by their own efforts (they generally became cooks) and by a meagre allowance from the family *illam*. This has now been changed by

[611] [613] [582] 105 564 [588] [463] [582] [428]

[1] I continue to make use of the terms *matrilocal* and *patrilocal* here, rather than *uxorilocal* and *virilocal* as still being perfectly adequate as they were for Ceylon previously.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWII Kerala AWII

having children by them. The latter were born into the Nayar caste, and to all practical purposes were untouchables for their fathers. But, in fact, Nayars thus procreated were perfectly conscious of the high caste blood which flowed in their veins and which made them only slightly less important than their exalted sires. A feeling of close relation to the Brahmins was thus definitely generated in them, giving them the self-assurance and self-assertion in public affairs that distinguishes them from their fellow Indians to this day. Others, and especially Arabs, have also contracted *sambandham* unions with the Nayar women of Malabar. Such unions are equally possible with *marumakkathayam* Tiya women, and between members of the same endogamous caste, when regular marriage is not possible.

Although it appears to be a very loose way of setting up a household (there is no other ceremony than the possible offering of a piece of cloth by the man to the woman, and the relation can be broken off informally at any time), in actual fact there were, and still are, very few cases of *sambandham* unions not lasting. The main drawback seems to have been the feeling of frustration in the male partner that he was unable to do anything for, or leave anything to, his children. British legislation attempted to remedy this state of affairs by the Malabar Marriage Act IV of 1896 which provided for such unions to be registered and stipulated that when they were, they would be looked upon as regular, legal marriages entitling the "wife" and children to maintenance by the "husband" and father, and to inheritance of half his self-acquired property should he die intestate. Inheritance from father to son in matrilineal families has since been further legalized by the Madras *Marumakkathayam* Act of 1933, but its provisions really apply more specifically to the regular marriages of the *marumakkathayam* practising people. In accordance with them, the property of the *tarawads* can now be divided up between the members, if they so wish.

A specific custom of Kerala, which has never failed to intrigue outsiders, is still very much observed today, namely the ceremony of *tali-kettu-kalyanam*, or of the tying of the *tali*. The latter is a small piece of gold, through which a thread has been strung, and which is tied round the neck of a girl before she attains maturity. Speculation as to what is the significance, origin and function of this ritual has been rife over the years, but at least opinions do not seem to differ on the point that it represents some form of symbolic marriage, preceding and perhaps preparing the way for a real one, or for entry into a *sambandham* union.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Thandans

community. It was confirmed that this name, meaning "headman", is really a title (like so many others in Kerala – Nayar, Panikkar, Kurup, Menon, etc.) by which the Tiyas of south Malabar are known. He also answered questions about *tarawad* and *kiriyam*, marriage rites and cross-cousin preference, the prevalence of polyandry in the community and the changing times, points which have all been accounted for in the first part of this chapter.

On the second day, I made out the family's genealogy, which is given in the accompanying Table 3. A few words of comment are no doubt needed here. I had three informants in all, since two others were added, later, to the first. I have marked them as Nos. 1, 2, and 3. The generation to which the first informant belonged had originally consisted of nine children, from Kunji, the eldest, to Narayana, the youngest. Their *tarawad* was patrilineal and exogamous, as was also their matrilineal *kiriyam* in principle, but the rules of the latter were not observed very much any more beyond their immediate acquaintances. Kunji, now sixty two, was married at twenty; Kali, married when she was sixteen, divorced a year later and lived with her brothers; she was now sixty. All five brothers, when they were young, had been married polyandrously to Devaki, the eldest, Mayadi, now deceased, being sixteen at the time. Nani and Raman were issued from that marriage, and the young Raman and his family lived here, with his elder namesake in the same house. Devaki died when she was twenty nine, and the brothers were then all remarried, again polyandrously by their parents, to Kuniyama. Mayadi, then aged thirty, died the following year, and Raman senior became the *karanavan*.

Sankara then suddenly said that he was displeased with the common wife. He expressed a desire to break away, and asked his father and maternal uncle to find him another wife. There was considerable opposition to begin with, but, eventually, they gave in, and Kodamah was found for Sankara, who, however, did not move out and put up another household, but stayed in the family mansion with Raman. The latter retained Kuniyama as his wife and had four children by her – Krishna, Janeki, Kerthiyani, and Madivi. Sankara and Kodamah, now forty five and thirty five respectively, had one daughter, Devaki, whom they married off three years ago when she was sixteen.

The breaking away of their elder brother, Sankara, seems to have given Panju and Narayana ideas of liberty as well. Kuniyama was apparently not a very popular common spouse, or else Raman monopolized her too much – it was difficult to find out which, for all that I

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWII Kerala AWII
Kammalans

*595 564 [361] the cross-roads of the main Shoranur-Palghat highway of the road to Lakkidi, a few furlongs down the latter, on the right hand side. In contrast to the Thandan houses to which we had been, although not to the Tiya (Thiyya) houses of the Cochin labourers, the place looked rather [342] miserable. It was a thatched palm-leaf house, standing on a red laterite loam platform, in the middle of some paddy fields. There were signs [241] about that these Tathans were not only goldsmiths but that they now [231] also practised agriculture. There was paddy lying about to dry in heaps in the yard, and there were stalls for bullocks at the back.

*595 [601] We interviewed a man called Raman and his brother Kochen, aged fifty four and fifty two respectively, who lived polyandrously with their wife, Kurumba, forty five years old. They seemed rather impressed by [574] us, and were reluctant to speak. They observed the outward forms of hospitality, however, and presented us with fresh coconuts for us to drink the milk.

Raman told us that the household's name was Padijarehil, meaning "Western", and that it was part of five others which constituted the [611] Uzhugaparekil *tarawad*. The latter was *makkathayam*, as we expected, [614] and exogamous, as was also their *kiriyam*, although, here too, they only observed the rule in matters which concerned those members of it whom they knew. They had two and a half acres of paddy fields, in simple *verumpattam* lease from a Nambudri Brahmin janmi called Kodiertha-mana. For this they paid five rupees a year and handed in a part of the harvest – five hundred *parahs*, I have in my notes, three hundred from the *kanni* crop and two hundred from the *magaram*.[1] As it was an ordinary *verumpattam*, there was no renewal fee. They had a deficit this year of forty *parahs* (roughly lbs. 866¼) and they were wondering what they could do to make it good. Last year they had done "other work" [464] (presumably such as hiring themselves out as labourers) in order to raise the cash needed to compensate for the deficiency in grain, and they might do the same thing now. When I asked them what kind of *595 goldsmith's work they did, they laughed and said that they had given [326] this up; how could they carry on with their traditional profession, they [936] asked, when the sovereign which was once worth Rs. 25 had reached Rs. 77?

*595 427 293

[601] Raman and Kochen had had eleven children in their polyandrous

[1] This again seems too much. It is equivalent to lbs. 10,830 (1 Palghat *parah* = 10 *edengalis* = 40 *nalis* (1 *nali* = *tolas* 21¾ in s. Walluvanad and Palghat) = 866,40 *tolas*; as 40 *tolas* = 1 lb. in s. Malabar, 1 *parah* = 866,40 : 40 = 21¾ lbs and 500 = lbs 10,830). [804]

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Kammalans

union with Kurumba. They were not the only ones following the custom in the family, as their sister, Paru, now dead, had also had two husbands, the brothers Aiyappan and Narayan of the Vetukatukundu *tarawad*. She had died in childbirth, when her little boy was born; the child died too. Nilu, their youngest sister, had also died giving birth to a boy, her first-born, who did not survive either. Of what Narayani, the next youngest sister, had died, was not clear, but it had been after she had given birth to a little girl who was still alive. Of their children, the eldest, a boy called Kunju, and his sister, the eldest but one and bearing the name of Kunji, had married a brother and sister of a neighbouring *tarawad* called Putanparekil; there had been no marriage between cross-cousins. They did, however, say that this was the best form of union, as the Thandans had said. The genealogy of the family is given in Table 11.

I have described how, previously, we went into the other compound, where the Tiyas of 1939 used to live, to question the family of blacksmiths about their polyandry. This sub-caste of the Kammalans is called *Karuwan* or *Perinkollan* and they, too, are not a wealthy class. These lived only a few years from the Thatan household just described, and their dwelling was very similar to the other. The yard of the thatched house had blacksmith's instruments lying about it, which showed at once who lived there.

We met and interviewed a man called Ittenam, aged fifty five, whose brother, Poreyn, with whom he used to share a common wife, Paru, was now dead. He was a widower, and lived with his sons, Raman and Kunyuni, twenty two and twenty years old, who were present at our talk. Their common wife, Nani, twenty, was also there, a little baby boy on her hip, and the two other women with her were her sister-in-law, Narayani, twenty four, who was the wife of both her brothers and also the sister of her two husbands, and Kunji, the thirty six year old elder sister of Narayani, Raman and Kunyuni. A picture of her is given in Fig. 12; she was here on a visit, as her household was elsewhere. All the women, except Kunji, were bare-breasted, and, when they were not suckling the babies on their hips, milk ran down onto their abdomens from their naked breasts. Itteenam's elder sister, Unuli, was alive, aged sixty one, but she was married and had her home elsewhere with her husband, Narayan.

When I made the genealogy of this household, I found that its name was Mudrikkelparampil. The *tarawad* was similarly named and was exogamous together with the *kiriyam*, as was to be expected. *Makka-*

[TEXT CONTINUES ON P. 197]

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Kammalans

thayam was followed and caste, or rather sub-caste, endogamy. There was more polyandry in the second generation of this family than in any other encountered so far. I found that Kunji was married to two husbands; Lakshmi, aged thirty three, to four husbands; Paru, thirty, to two husbands; Sita, twenty eight, to three husbands; and Narayani, already mentioned, to two husbands. All the respective husbands were brothers, and only fraternal polyandry was practised. The women had all married early: Kunji and Yakshmi at sixteen, Paru at fifteen, Sita a bit later at twenty four, and Narayani, the youngest, at eighteen. The reason for which Sita had married later was that she had been taken by the three younger husbands of her elder sister Lakshmi, after seventeen years of marriage with the latter. Only Kanju, the eldest, had remained with Lakshmi, and Raman, Narayan and Krishna had decided to marry Sita jointly, when they found that she was not getting married and showed no inclination to do so outside. The two younger brothers of the Mudrikkelparampil household, Raman and Kunyuni, were eighteen and sixteen when they took Nani to wife; she was now twenty. Polyandry certainly did not look as if it were dying out in the blacksmith's caste, judging, at least, from this striking example.

The property upon which the family lived was worth four thousand rupees. It consisted of the house, some agricultural implements and a paddy field. The people were tenants of the Nambudri Brahmin *janmi* Kodierthamana, and paid him the rent of a customary *verumpattam* nine rupees yearly, plus a renewal fee of thrice the rent every twelve years. Poreyn and Kunyuni were practising smiths, hence the implements we had seen on coming in, and Raman worked at the Metal Industries Ltd. in Shoranur, where we camped. They also cultivated the paddy field to produce some of the rice they needed themselves, although the yield was not very great. The genealogy is given in Table 12.

On the 15th of November, 1949, together with interpreter and guide, I visited a family belonging to the third sub-caste of the Kammalans, that of the carpenters or *Asari* (often pronounced *Ashari*). I heard that laterite-cutters called *Puri-asari* or "mud carpenters" were assimilated to these people, but that they only constituted a division of the sub-caste. They are also reputed to be polyandrous; I did no have an opportunity, however, to verify this myself.

The *Asari* whom I saw that day, lived at Palappuram, a village on the main Shoranur-Palghat road, some few miles east of Ottappalam. The compound of the house was by the side of the road on the right, just beyond the village, coming from the west. It was a very poor looking

[Text continues on p 199]

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWII Kerala AWII
Kammalans

construction made of woven palm leaves and thatched, and we interviewed two men: Raman, aged fifty seven, and his eldest son, Kutikrishnan, who was thirty five. The name of the household and *tarawad* was Perinkulam.

Kutikrishnan told us that he had two fathers, Raman, who was with us that day, and Shangu, a younger one, aged fifty five, who was absent. All his fathers' sisters, and there had been three of them, had died in infancy. His mother was called Lakshmi and was fifty; I was unable to ascertain the name of the *tarawad* from which she came. Kutikrishnan's wife bore the same name as his mother and he had had three boys and a girl by her. Only the daughter was alive, as the sons had all died of what he described as "convulsions".

I asked why, if the fathers had been polyandrous, the second generation was not so too. Informant 1 attributed it to times having changed and "civilization spreading". By this he meant that people did not wear their hair tied in the typical Kerala top-knot on one side of the forehead any longer and had also taken to growing moustaches; he said, too, that it was the women now who objected to having more than one husband. In some marriage agreements, it was specified, he said, that the daughter of the house would only be given to one man. It was particularly in wealthy families that this was taking place, because they could afford it. Raman, informant 2, when consulted as to what he thought of these new ways, said that they were bad, but what could be done about them? In olden days, it was always said that polyandry was good because: "Where four breasts cannot agree, two heads can", meaning that the women cannot live in peace together while the men can. Nowadays, the young people did not seem to understand this, and the result was that property was split up between sons and life made harder for them.

When I came to make out the genealogy of the family, I found that in spite of all this talk about new-fangled ways, Amini, Kutikrishnan's sister was married polyandrously to three brothers of a *tarawad* called Warode. It was significant, however, that both informants disclaimed any knowledge of the names of the brothers of the elder husband, Narayan. Later, I heard that although Madhavan, a younger brother of informant 1, aged eighteeen, had not been publicly married to his sister-in-law, Lakshmi, he was known to share her with his brother in the old, traditional polyandrous way. The genealogy is given in Table 13.

The carpenter sub-caste of the Kammalans, Raman told us, have exogamous *tarawads* and *kiriyams*. They too, while observing the rule strictly for the *makkathayam tarawad*, are not so careful about it in the

[Text Continues on P. 201]

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWII Kerala AWII
Kammalans

kiriyam; in that matrilineal descent group they limit themselves to not marrying those of their acquaintances whom they know belong to it. The sub-caste is also endogamous, carpenter only marrying "carpentress", and never a *Puri-asari*. Normally, boys alone can inherit the property, but if there are no male heirs, the girls, even if they are married, will inherit equal shares.

The members of the Perinkulam household were subtenants of a Nayar tenant called Mutad Achutah Nayar, himself the *verumpattamdar* of a Nayar *janmi* from Kavalappaia near Shoranur called Kavalappaia Mupil Nayar. As *kudiyiruppu* tenants of the site where the house was built, they paid a yearly rent of only one rupee.

On the 17th of November, 1949, I visited the house of a member of the fourth and last sub-caste of the Kammalans, the *Musari* (often pronounced *Mushari*), bell-metal (an alloy of lead and brass) smiths or braziers. It was near Lakkidi in the Walluvanad taluk, one furlong north of the main road, and to reach it, my interpreters and I followed a very attractive path, sunk deep between high banks of earth and overshadowed with coconut and arecanut palm trees.

We arrived at a miserable house, standing in a grove of palms and plantains, a red laterite courtyard in front, in which could be seen some stone moulds in grooves – no doubt the foundry. There was nobody about, but when we called out, a little girl (whom we later heard was called Menakhi) appeared and said that she would go and fetch her father. He arrived soon afterwards, a big, strong man, fifty years old, called Krishnan. He wore his hair over his forehead in the typical Malayalam top knot, and he had a very ugly face.

The name of the household, he told us, was Puawutterparamba and it belonged to the Chelamanaparamba *tarawad*. Our informant was the youngest brother of three, and there was a sister called Kali, aged forty nine, about whom, however, he could tell us nothing at all. The whole family used to live, it seemed, at a place called Nedungothani, near Palappuram. That was their village, he said. But then, the elder brother, Konnan, now sixty five years old, had got married some thirty years ago to a woman named Sita whom he had met while "roaming about". He had married late as a result of this proclivity for wandering away from home, and, with his bride, aged fifty today (Krishnan could not tell us the name of her *tarawad*), he had moved to Wallancheri, near Kutipuram, Pattambi, because he had found business bad in Nedungothani. He was still living in Wallancheri and had five children, of whom four were married, the two daughters away to men of other vil-

1 Live in the carpenter Sub-caste of the Kammalans -- Analyst

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW11 Kerala AW11
Kammalahs

lages. Here again, the informant was unable to give us *tarawad* names, and indeed this was most characteristic of the whole interview. He gave village names instead, saying that they used these now in his caste.

After Konnan had left, their father and their mother's brother got Kunyikai, his elder brother aged sixty two today, and himself married to Kunyu, a young girl fifteen years old at the time, from the Kerikell *tarawad* in Cochin state, resident very close to Lakkidi on the other side of the Ponani river, only about a mile away. That was twenty five years ago, and Kunyu was now forty years old. Very soon, Kunyikai found it impossible to live in this polyandrous atmosphere (Krishnan would give no details), and asked their maternal uncle to get him another wife. Their father had died in the meantime, and their mother's brother was thus the only person who could do this for him. He found Chiru for Kunyikai, and they were wed two years after the former marriage.

All the members of the family never lived together, however, because as soon as the wedding had taken place, Krishnan and the former common wife, took their part of the property (which was not much) and moved to this place near Lakkidi, where they established themselves. They chose it because it was so close to the wife's relatives. All the children they now had were Krishnan's, as Kunyu did not have any for five years after the polyandrous marriage. Krishnan, the eldest boy, now twenty, was born three years after the shift of residence. Kunyikai stayed behind in the family home, and was still there at the time of the interview. He had one boy called Kunju, aged twelve. Of the children of Krishnan and Kunyu, only the second, a daughter called Kalyany, and aged eighteen, was married. She became the wife of two brothers, Raman and Chami, of Ambalapara village, at the age of fifteen. She had one child, a boy called Paru, one year old. The genealogy which I established from this information is given in Table 14.

I was very surprised to find the informant so ignorant of the *tarawad* names – although he did know that of his own *tarawad*. He assured me that village names had now taken their place and that, in his caste, they observed what might be called "village exogamy". Did this mean that the bellmetal smith's patrilineal clans coincided with topographical units such as villages? There was, it seemed to me, a possibility of this being so, although I could get no confirmation of the hypothesis from anybody, not even from my interpreters and guides. The *Musari* observed exogamy also in their *kiriyams*, Krishnan said, although, as in the case of other castes which I have previously described, they only did so for those of the group whom they knew. Inheritance was *makkathayam*,

[TEXT Continues on P. 204]

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWII Kerala AWII
Kolla-Kurups

The name of the household was Palappuram *Kalarikel*. Intrigued that it should have the same name as the neighbouring town, and that a new word instead of *tarawad* should be used, I enquired how this had come about. I was told that the *Kolla-kurups* did not have patrilineal clans of the usual Kerala pattern because they were too few and far apart; instead, they used the name *kalarikel*, which is that of a Nayar armoury for training soldiers, or a "gymnasium". This is in accordance with their profession as masseurs, and in order to distinguish them from each other, they qualified them with the name of the town or village in which they were situated. Otherwise, the same rules of marriage as in the rest of the artisan caste were enforced: the *kalarikels* were patrilineal and exogamous, and inheritance was *makkathayam*. There were also *kiriyams* or matrilineal descent groups in which exogamy was observed; Shankaran was even able to give me the name of his, Pal, which meant "white", he told me. I was struck by the resemblance between the *kalarikel* system of the *Kolla-kurups* and that of the "villages" of the *Musaris* whom I had encountered three days before (see p. 202). It was as though this instance of something different from the more usual *tarawads* had acted as a transition between these and the *kalarikels* of the *Kurups* today.

I made the family's genealogy, which is given here in Table 15. Shankaran had had two fathers, Raman and Karapan, both dead now, aged fifty four and forty two respectively. His mother was called Kunji, and was still alive, aged seventy. His fathers had had a sister, who died when she was thirty, called Paru and who had married a certain Krishnan of another *kalarikel*, at Malleshamangalam. There had been no issue from the marriage. Of his own generation, only he himself and his sister, Kalyany, were still alive. His eldest sister, Kunyiama, who had been married to two brothers, Kutan and Shanghuni of a *kalarikel* at Paratipullivil, had died when she was forty; her offspring included two boys, one of whom was married, and a girl, married polyandrously to two brothers, Balan and Bhaskar of Chunangad *kalarikel*. Kalyany had two husbands also, Kunyuni and Velu, but I did not manage to record these men's *kalarikel*. (I took a photograph of Kalyany standing at the entrance gate of the compound, with the paddy fields at the back, and another one of the family sitting round Kunji, the informant's twelve year old daughter, and listening to her singing a song; see Figs. 11 and 13.)

The house in which they all lived (except Kalyany who was only here on a visit to her brother, and lived elsewhere with her husbands), stood on land belonging to a *janmi* called Kollapuri Nayar. They did not pay

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWII Kerala AWII

any rent for it, but on the contrary, received payment as shampooers and masseurs of their landlord. Fees for those services were, on an average, twelve annas per session, and they received the money at regular intervals from seven to fourteen or twenty one days. Four times a year (every "season"), they were also entitled to two bags of rice, food, oil for massage and a bath(?). (I am not quite clear as to what the latter item stands for, but this is what I have in my notes.)

On the 26th of November, 1949, I visited a *Tol-kollan* household, at Meitenadesam, near Ottappalam. The name of this sub-caste means literally "skin-workers", and its members are leather-workers and cobblers. The house in which this family lived was the most miserable of all those we had or were still to see. It stood in the coconut groves on the outskirts of Ottappalam, and we went there on foot. It was a broken down construction of woven palm leaves and mud walls and the thatch on the roof was in bad condition. An old lady called Kurumba (see Fig. 14), sat just outside the front door, bare breasted and with enlarged holes in the lobes of her ears so that she could accomodate the sizeable gold lumps which are inserted here in Malayalam fashion. With her was her elderly daughter, Kunji, who received us. She was very polite and insisted on offering us some fresh coconut milk.

When we asked her about polyandry, she scoffed at the idea and said that in her family at least, the practice had been given up already in the generation of her father and mother. The men quarrelled too much about the common wife, she said, and besides, the women resented it and did not want it any more. There were members of her sub-caste who were still polyandrous, but as they were few and far between it would not be easy to locate them.

Under the circumstances, it seemed useless to make out a genealogy of these people, and I did not have time to look for a polyandrous *Tol-kollan* family elsewhere.

From this house, in the evening of the same day and with the same interpreters and guides, I went on to the home of some *Kanisans* or astrologers, who are also known as *Panikkars* locally. Theirs was a better dwelling, standing hidden in a thick grove of plantains and coconut trees well shaded and pleasant. We were received by a man called Ramankuti, thirty five years old, who offered us some chairs to sit on and very readily answered our questions.

He told us that his household bore the name of Pellarmangalam, and that his *kalarikel* was similarly called. It appeared that *Kanisans* do not have *tarawads* either, and that their patrilineal clans are called "gymna-

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1965
Kanisans
Manans

siums" too – for what reason, I could not find out; I could see no relation between astrology and a gymnasium. Like the *Kolla-kurups*, they also had *kiriyams* which were exogamous as the *kalarikels* were; the informant's matrilineal clan was called Manga. Inheritance was *makkathayam*.

The family living in the house here, was divided into two sections. The first, of which Ramankuti was the eldest, consisted of himself and his brother, Ticheri, three years younger than him. Their father, who was now dead, had successively had two wives, Lakshmi and Kalyany, both of them still alive and living in the house; the first section was descendant from the first wife, while the other was issued from the second. Kalyany had had six children, of which, Paru, aged thirty, was the eldest; there were four brothers, Pachu, Shanghuni, Kumaran and Gopalkrishnan, and a younger daughter called Nani, aged twelve. The interesting part of the organization was that the two sections had both contracted polyandrous marriages: Ramankuti and Ticheri with one wife, Madhevi aged twenty eight: their four half brothers with Devaki, twenty three years old. Both women were from other *kalarikels*, the first from Kangal and the other from Kavalapara. They all lived in the same house, however, with Nani, only Paru having married Krishnan of Kutiparli *kalarikel* and having gone off to live with him. Paru had three children with Krishnan, as did Madhevi with the informant and his brother. The four brothers had only one little daughter, aged one year, with Devaki.

The genealogy, as it was dictated to me, is given in Table 16.

Ramankuti told me that he and Pachu were the fully-fledged astrologers of the family. Kumaran and Gopalkrishnan were studying the art. Ticheri did odd jobs as a labourer, and Shanghuni was employed as a workman in the local match factory. The house that they all lived in was rented on a *kudiviruppu* lease for which they paid eight annas a year to the *janmi* of the land upon which it stood, a Nambudri Brahmin called Totapai Mana Nilakanda Nambudripad.

On the 22nd of November, 1949, I went to Lakkidi to visit the house of a *Manan*. These people are washermen and barbers, and they play an important role in Kerala as it is they and they alone who can wash the polluted clothes of menstruating Nambudri Brahmin and Nayar women. But they are also dancers in the temple on festive occasions.

We found the house for which we were looking, in the actual village of Lakkidi, in the vicinity of the railway station, near the river. It was a moderately large, well-to-do building, standing isolated in a large compound, in which clothes had been laid out to dry on the ground.

[TEXT CONTINUES ON P. 210]

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Manans
Panans

first moved to Mangode village, where Kali came from, for eleven years. Today they were living at Managhat, where Erechen had found it easier to get work.

As Kunji, my aged informant, was getting tired, we now took on Krishnan, son of the late Krishnan by his second wife, Kunji (the repetition of the same names in a family in Kerala is very confusing). He helped us to check all this material and to correct some inaccuracies which had crept in. I noticed that in some cases it was impossible to obtain the name of the *tarawad*, and that the name of the village would be given instead. There were, however, no *kalarikels* with the Manans, I was told. The patrilineal clans were exogamous, as were also the matrilineal *kiriyams* of these people, although they were not very well known and practically neglected in present-day marriages. Inheritance was *makkathayam*, as expected, but I could get no confirmation of the reported four endogamous subdivisions described in the *Gazeteer of the Malabar and Anjengo Districts*, p. 130 (see Bibliography).

This Manan family was living on ground belonging to a Nambudri Brahmin *janmi* called Mangala Mana C.M.C. Narayana Nambudripad, but they did not pay him any rent. They were there more as his employees and, in exchange for dwelling space, rendered him the invaluable services which he needed from them as washermen and barbers.

In the afternoon of the same day of the 25th of November, 1949, upon which I had visited a Thandan household (see above, p. 189), I went to Palappuram to see the family of a *Panan* (exorcist and leaf umbrella maker).

They lived in a poor but neat and cleanly house, situated in a rather thickly overgrown grove of the usual Kerala vegetation. On the verandah of the modest building of dried cow-dung and mud, a bare breasted woman, Sita, aged forty five, and three boys awaited us. She received us nicely and spoke quite readily. She seemed resigned to her poverty and conditions and only complained to us that she was not able to give the boys more and proper food.

She told us that she lived with the surviving husband of a once polyandrous union, in which she had been married when she was eighteen to two brothers, Panju, who had died two years after the wedding, at twenty one, and Korappan, her present forty four year old husband. She had had a daughter, Kunji, within the first year of her marriage, and four boys afterwards with Korappan. All the children, including the twenty six year old eldest girl, were unmarried; she was still breast-feeding the youngest, two and a half year old Kumaran. This, as I

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWII Kerala AWII
Panans

853 could see, was obviously a way of circumventing the difficulty of adequate nourishment, something to which a great majority of the mothers in the vast multitudes of Asia habitually resort.

*595 [868] [126] Father Korappan was away working, and he had taken twelve year old Krishna with him as an apprentice, so I was not able to photograph the whole family. But I obtained a picture of Sita with Kumaran at her breast and Chami and Narayan sitting next to her, which I give here in Fig. 15. The genealogy is in Table 18.

564 614 [428] Where *tarawads* were not known, Sita gave me the name of the village. From what she told me, the clans were patrilineal, inheritance was *makkathayam*, and exogamy was the rule, also in the *kiriyams*. Her husband's matrilineal descent group was called Walleananad. The house

*595 [429] was leased as a *kudiyiruppu* for which they paid a yearly rent of twelve annas to the *janmi*, Eranur Mana Narayan Nambudripad. They had been fifteen years at this place, and had come from about a furlong away where they used to reside before. This awakened my curiosity, and I enquired how this had happened.

Sita told me that her husbands originally lived in the other house, because it was the *tarawad's* headquarters. The name Kundilpadam which it bore meant "low field", and Vellarkaden which was the name of their present house, was just the appellation by which their new dwelling was known. Her husbands' father was the youngest of a pair of brothers, and they had both taken wives to themselves and had not lived in polyandry. Their offspring, her husbands and their father's elder brother's children, had continued to live together, and they, Panju and Korappan, had married first, twenty seven years ago. Then, twelve years later, the cousins had also got married, and, in order to make place for them, Sita and her surviving husband, Korappan, being the junior members, had moved away to another residence, the one where they lived at present.

[60] I made the genealogy of the neighbouring household as the informant gave it to me. It is shown here in Table 19. Two brothers, Panju and Raman, respectively aged forty six and forty, lived polyandrously with a common wife called Cherona, thirty three years old. They had four children, of whom none were married, since they were still too young.

361 On the 21st of November, 1949, I went to Palarmanpalam, a cluster of houses on the road between Ottappalam and the Lakkidi railway station, about a mile before the latter is reached. The object of our visit was to see a *Pulluvan* household, that is of herbalists and *nag* snake worshippers, a sub-caste associated to the artisans.

564 752 971

[Text Continues on P. 214]

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWII Kerala AWII
Pulluvans

We found the house, which was a small one, in a grove of plantains, surrounded by tapioca fields. A man named Komon, aged twenty nine, met us and took us onto the neat verandah of the building which was constructed in the usual Kerala style. He told us that the name of his household was Putanpunakkil, meaning "new house", and I made out the genealogy of his family, as shown here in Table 20.

His elder brother, Raman, aged thirty three, had died recently, he said. He had had two younger sisters too, Chimdevi and Narayani, both of whom were also dead, the eldest at fifteen and the youngest at twelve. He and his elder brother had been married first polyandrously to a woman called Kalyany, for four years. Their father had found her for them, from the village of Churumudacheri. They had had a daughter by her, Ittiyadi, who was now eleven.

Kalyany, it seemed, had never really settled down in polyandry, and had always said that she did not like having two husbands. She wanted to stay alone with the eldest, Raman, but the latter did not accept. As he persisted in this attitude, in spite of her insistence that she have him all to herself, she eventually ran away, back to her parents' home, leaving the daughter with the brothers. That was seven years ago, and their father had immediately provided them with another wife, Kunji, from Manar village. She was twenty at the time, and had been married earlier, at the age of fourteen, to two brothers, Velu and Aiyappan of Tirumatankodu village. She did not get on with these two men and wanted to leave them. When Komon's father chose her for him and his brother, she left her married home, and the men, quite exceptionally, allowed her to take away the boy they had had with her, called Paramesuram and who was now aged ten. Kunji herself was now twenty seven years old and she had had three children with her new husbands, two boys and a girl. I could see that she was expecting another child shortly (in two months time, they told me).

There appeared to be no *tarawads* with these people, and village names were used instead for the patrilineal clans, which were exogamous. There were *kiriyams*, also exogamous, and inheritance was *makkathayam*. The sub-caste was reputed to allow marriage of brothers and sisters; the Gazeteer mentions this on p. 133. When I asked Komon about it, he protested that it was calumny and that they had never done such a thing. In my opinion, the reputation wrongly based on insufficient evidence, comes from the fact that these people form a very small group and those persons who are of the same generation use classificatory kinship terms which are apt to make it appear that "sister" mar-

[TEXT CONTINUES ON P. 216]

4: Yalman E-4,5 (1954-1956) 1971 AX4 Sinhalese
Kerala AW11

NORTH NAYAR

Anthropological investigations in Malabar have usually gone straight to the most spectacular cases: the matrilineal Nayar *taravad* of Cochin and Travancore. This tendency, though understandable, is hardly justified, since the matrilineal *taravad* achieves its greatest elaboration among the aristocratic ranks of the ruling families and can hardly be accepted as a typical feature of the landscape.

It should be clear that today there is great variation in practice among the Nayar groups in Malabar, not only from the aristocrats to the low-caste menials (who like to call themselves Nayar) but also within the same Nayar "subcastes." In an illuminating passage, Karve (1953), for example, notes how many individual Nayar feel that they should lay the foundations for a new *taravad* in their sister's name as soon as they can afford to do so, for a named matrilineal *taravad* is clearly an important aspect of status for Nayar men. Gough (1952*a*) has used a historical model to deal with the variations. She argues, in effect, that the past was orderly and the present is confused. Theory and practice were harmonious in the past but are now breaking down. The tempo of new developments, political, economic, social, can hardly be denied, but we can suggest that the past idealized by Gough may well have been as diverse (in terms of the structure of matrilineal *taravad*) as the present. It is likely that there always were nascent, medium-sized, and fully developed *taravad* based on the same principles.

We shall examine the aristocratic Nayar lineages in a moment. In North Malabar, the *taravad* is significantly different from the region around the Cochin kingdoms. In the North, there was apparently less political centralization and a relatively limited development of subcategories of Nayar castes with special duties. Most of the Nayar were called Nambiar and were small landowners who lived in villages. They recognized dispersed matrilineal clans, and the property group in the locality was regarded as a segment of such a clan.

At marriage the girl moved to the household of her husband, but she returned temporarily to her natal household to bear her children (a custom still followed among the Sinhalese). The children when grown went to their MB; the males stayed with the MB as members of matri-lines and the females were married off from that house.

Here, clearly, are the complex claims on the sister and her children. I need hardly point out that all aspects of the general structure are to be seen in their organization. First, the usual Dravidian terminology was used for reference (Schneider and Gough, 1961, p. 404). A clear distinction was made between the categories for reference and the

4: Yalman E-4,5 (1954-1956) 1971 AX4 Sinhalese
Kerala AW11

claim of the brothers and sisters upon one another, a point which is indeed specifically made by Gough (1955*a*, p. 61).

In view of all this evidence, it is somewhat disconcerting to discover that Gough finds it necessary to identify "residual matrilineages" to explain the role of maternal kin as well as the taboos on maternal parallel cousins in this caste. We are faced once more with the inexplicable bias in the direction of "lineage" explanations to the exclusion of others even in so sophisticated an observer as Dr. Gough.

She notes (1957*a*, p. 61) that "the former existence of exogamous matrilineal clans underlines this persistence of the bond between women and their natal kinfolk, especially their brothers." But the evidence she gives (p. 60) to show even the former existence of such clans is hardly convincing: "My informants knew nothing about these clans except that they were once exogamous. They are not so today, since some people do not remember their clan names. Though the clans have died out, marriage is prohibited between known matrilineal kin."

Although the general structure is verified in this group as well, we have no information regarding hypergamy. We can only say with certainty that the comparison of the Tiyyar in North and South Malabar shows quite directly that slight variations permit the general structure to be linked to a patrilineal as well as a matrilineal descent ideology. The underlying theme is general, and the variations in descent, in residence, in inheritance are local and highly specific.

THE MATRILINEAL CASTES OF COCHIN AND HYPERGAMY

Before we turn to an examination of the aristocratic matrilineages of Cochin which have fascinated many anthropologists by their perfectly logical but highly exotic solutions to sex and marriage, I wish to underline some of the principles of endogamy and hypergamy.

First, the purpose of endogamy is to cut off the unit from kinship connections with other units. A complete severance of all intercourse (food and sex are usually chosen as symbols) renders the unit unique, but it will not in itself establish hierarchical superiority. To express hierarchy (as well as separation) some asymmetrical relations are logically necessary. In endogamous castes this takes the form of asymmetrical forms of address, dress symbolism, and, significantly, a rule such as "They will take food from us (*A*), but we will not take food from them (*B*)—*A*, in other words, is superior to *B*.

Second, when the groups are placed on an interlocking hierarchy, more subtle expressions can be used. "*A* will not accept food from *B*,